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INDUSTRY AMONG THE FRENCH IN THE ILLINOIS COUNTRY

Although the activity of the French in the "Illinois country," as the small section of the upper Mississippi Valley with its center of population about Kaskaskia was called, forms an isolated chapter in the industrial history of the West, owing to its failure to connect with the species of industry brought to this region by the American pioneer, yet, from the point of view of French success in America, these few colonies played a rôle of no small importance. Their agriculture, though practiced in a very desultory fashion, provided an important means of subsistence for the French colonies on the lower Mississippi; their prosperous Indian trade produced a considerable revenue for the French traders. But in the end, by drawing the attention of the settlers away from more stable industries, this very prosperity was a great element of weakness. To neglect of the first principles of industry must be added, as causes of decadence, a military control, and an unfortunate system of trade monopolies. The transfer of this region to Great Britain in accordance with the treaty of 1763 gave a final blow. Its history was, therefore, practically complete before the American pioneer began to lay claim to Illinois. In the expedition of George Rogers Clark, on which occasion the American soldiers were first introduced to this fertile region, appears the connecting link between the old and the new régime.¹

The French inhabitation of this territory dates back to about the year 1698, when a mission of the Séminaire des Missions Étrangères was founded among the Tamaroa and Cahokia Indians, and around this soon sprang up Cahokia, probably the oldest of the French settlements in Illinois.² Fifty years later,

¹ See discussion in *Western Monthly Magazine*, I, 73-75; according to this journal, the first settlement in Illinois formed by emigrants from the United States was made near Bellefontaine, Monroe County, by James Moore.

² This priority was disputed by Kaskaskia. See Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, III, 70, note.

this country was the seat of five distinct settlements: Cahokia, near the mouth of the creek of the same name and about five miles from the present city of St. Louis; Fort Chartres, on the east bank of the Mississippi River; St. Philip, about four miles from Fort Chartres; Kaskaskia, about five miles above the mouth of the Kaskaskia River; and Prairie du Rocher. On the west side of the Mississippi was Ste. Geneviève.³

These settlements reached their period of greatest prosperity about the time of the French and Indian wars. At that time, Kaskaskia, the most flourishing of the villages, possessed a population which was estimated at from 2,000 to 3,000.⁴ Upon the cession of this country to the English in 1763, the condition of the French colonies rapidly declined. Some of the wealthier inhabitants, who refused to live under English rule, moved across the Mississippi River to the nascent village of St. Louis, while others migrated to New Orleans. Some of the poorer settlers submitted to the new domination. In 1793 Kaskaskia was but a shadow of its former self. "Nothing is to be seen," said André Michaux, "but houses in ruin and abandoned, because the French of the Illinois country, having always been brought up in, and accustomed to, the fur trade with the savages, have become the laziest and most ignorant of all men."⁵ At the same time Michaux described Prairie du Rocher as containing from twenty to twenty-four families, and reported Fort Chartres in ruins.⁶ Cahokia had upward of eighty families in 1790 and about half that number in 1804.⁷ The population of these settlements was composed of French, negroes, and sav-

³ J. W. Monette, *Valley of the Mississippi*, I, 167.

⁴ Various estimates are given of the population of Kaskaskia and of the Illinois country. The above figures are taken from Harper's *Encyclopaedia of American History*, V. 218. Villiers du Terrage, in his *Les dernières années de la Louisiane*, says the population of Louisiana, in 1742, was 4,000 whites and 2,000 negroes. See La Harpe, *Journal historique* (ed. 1831), p. 375, for the population in 1724.

⁵ André Michaux, "Travels," in Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, III, 70.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁷ C. F. Volney, *A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States* (ed. 1804), p. 343.

ages.⁸ In 1750, the five villages are said to have contained 1,100 white persons, three hundred black, and sixty Indian slaves.⁹

A congenial climate and a very rich soil constituted important resources of the Illinois, but other natural features also made living very easy to colonists who were not over-disposed to work. Among these were abundance of game and variety of fruits. Wild cattle, deer, elk, bear, and wild turkeys were in abundance everywhere.¹⁰ During a portion of autumn and spring, the country was overrun with ducks and wild pigeons. The cattle multiplied exceedingly, and scarcely any care was bestowed upon them. In addition, there were apples, peaches, plums, nuts, and wild grapes. The oak forests added to the ease of swine culture, and the maple trees provided sugar.¹¹ Thus the products of the Illinois country included maize, wheat, flour and meal, salted hams of hogs and bears, tallow, myrtle wax, leather, tobacco, some buffalo wool,¹² venison, and bear's

⁸ Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations*, LXIX, 145; LXIX, 301, note.

⁹ Negro slavery was introduced into Illinois by Philip Francis Renault who, in 1719, according to Schoolcraft, was made director-general of the mining properties of the Company of the West. On the way to America, Renault's expedition brought 500 slaves from San Domingo. When Renault gave up lead-mining and returned to France in 1742 these slaves were sold. Indian slavery possibly existed among the French before the arrival of the first negro slaves. The Indians frequently enslaved their captives; in various instances, these were transferred to the whites. Vivier, writing in 1750, classified the population of the Illinois as French, negroes, and savages, "to say nothing of the half-breeds born of the one or the other." According to Capt. Pittman, who visited Illinois in 1766, the "Mission of St. Sulpice" when it was broken up about 1764, disposed of thirty negroes. At St. Philip the "captain of the militia" had about twenty slaves; and at Ste. Geneviève, Mons. Valet is said to have owned one hundred negroes. In this connection see H. R. Schoolcraft, *A View of the Lead Mines of Missouri*, pp. 14, 15; Captain Philip Pittman, *Present State of the European Settlements* (ed. 1906), p. 93; E. G. Mason, *Old Fort Chartres*, "Fergus Historical Series," No. 12.

¹⁰ *Jesuit Relations*, LXIX, 145, and LXVI, 225.

¹¹ Dumont, *Mémoires historiques* (ed. 1753), p. 56.

¹² The Indians were very skilful in spinning this article. "They make it as fine as that of the English sheep," said Charlevoix; "sometimes one would even take it for silk." Pownhall states that the Indian women on the Sus-

grease and oil. Lead was produced in Missouri a short distance from Ste. Geneviève. These articles, together with furs and peltries, formed the export items of the country. Myrtle wax was used in the production of candles, a large quantity of which were in demand in San Domingo.¹³ In return for the above exports, the boatmen brought back to the Illinois rice, cotton, manufactured goods from France, and silver coin of French and Spanish mintage. Accounts were kept in livres, and besides coin, "good peltries," at a certain price per pound, were an acknowledged measure of value.¹⁴

It is impossible to ascertain the date at which the Illinois country first began making shipments to the South. New Orleans was not founded until 1718, and even in 1722, when Charlevoix visited the place, it was of little importance; but the settlement at Biloxi was in existence in 1699, and one on the Mobile River in 1702, and there was no doubt a necessity of communicating between this place and upper Louisiana before New Orleans came into existence. In November, 1705, La Harpe noted the arrival of two boats, and in October of the following year, a pirogue came down from the Illinois.¹⁵ About the year 1719, good wheat from this region was brought to New Orleans and sold for ten francs the quintal; excellent hams were also among the receipts.¹⁶

The industry of the Illinois country was an important element in the welfare of the French colonies in lower Louisiana, where, either through imprudence or repeated calamity of some description, the settlers were unable to make both ends meet.¹⁷

quehanna River in Pennsylvania, also, did excellent work with buffalo wool. See Charlevoix, *Letters to the Duchess Lesdiguières* (ed. 1763), pp. 239, 240, 293; and T. Pownhall, *Topographical Description, etc., of North America*, p. 8.

¹³ Philip Pittman, *Present State of the Colonies, etc.* (ed. 1906), p. 59.

¹⁴ Sidney Breese, *History of Illinois*, p. 203; J. H. Perkins, *Memoirs and Writings*, II, 192; T. Pownhall, *Topographical Description, etc.*, Appendix, p. 5.

¹⁵ La Harpe, *Journal historique*, pp. 93, 99, 101.

¹⁶ Dumont, *Mémoires historiques*, II, 73.

¹⁷ In this connection see A. Franz, *Die Kolonisation des Mississippithales*, pp. 129, 130, 157, 204, 252; Dumont, *Mémoires historiques*, I, 30; Charles Gayarre, *Louisiana, etc.*, p. 35.

In 1711 and again in 1712, there was a scarcity of provisions along the Gulf, and in 1722 the colonists were once more described as being in a wretched condition.¹⁸ Still later, about 1745, when the lower settlements were face to face with famine, they were saved by the timely arrival of the boats from the Illinois. As late as 1754, the requisition on the supplies of the Illinois for use by the French troops from Canada put New Orleans to considerable inconvenience, inasmuch as some of the provisions needed by the Arkansas settlements, by Natchez, and by Pointe Coupée had to be secured from San Domingo.¹⁹ It is significant, also, that the commerce of New Orleans rested to a considerable extent on the receipts from Illinois.

Of all the exports, flour and meal were perhaps of the most importance. According to Charlevoix, a Fleming, who was a servant of the Jesuits, taught them how to sow wheat. This grain, however, on account of the careless manner in which it was cultivated, did not yield abundantly; corn, on the other hand, reproduced over a thousandfold even to the crude culture it received.²⁰ An order regarding a mill at Kaskaskia, signed by the commandant February 9, 1727, indicates that there was possibly such an establishment at or near that town about that time.²¹ The Jesuits paid special attention to the erection of mills,²² and some of the finest establishments were on their plantations. These mills, like the establishments in the days of the American pioneers in the West, were provided in many cases with apparatus both for grinding flour and for sawing planks.

In the account of Captain Philip Pittman, who visited Illi-

¹⁸ Villiers du Terrage, *Les dernières années de la Louisiane*, p. 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁰ Charlevoix Letters above quoted, No. XXVII.

²¹ Quoted in Sidney Breese, *History of Illinois*, pp. 290-93.

²² The French at New Orleans had been compelled to give up a mill which they had established, on account of the crumbly nature of the mill stones, which mixed sand with the meal (Dumont, *Mémoires historiques*, I, 30).

nois about 1766, five mills are described. At Kaskaskia, where the river afforded a good mill site, one Mons. Paget, who is said to have introduced the water mill into the country, had an excellent establishment of this description, which combined the operations of sawing and grinding. Kaskaskia was in possession of a second mill situated on the plantation formerly owned by the Jesuits. After the cession of the country to the English, the establishment was bought by Beauvais, who furnished "the king's magazine" in one season with 86,000 pounds of flour, which was "only a part of his harvest."²³ At St. Philip, a village four or five miles from Fort Chartres on the road to Cahokia, was a water mill owned by "the captain of the militia," who was the owner of about twenty slaves. A fourth mill was described at Cahokia, on the plantation formerly owned by the mission of St. Sulpice. This had been purchased by a Frenchman who chose to remain under the English government. Finally, at Ste. Geneviève, there was a "very fine water mill for corn and planks," belonging to Valet. This person owned upwards of a hundred negroes and kept a number of white persons constantly employed.²⁴ Valet raised a large quantity of corn, and provisions of various kinds. At the time Pittman wrote, St. Louis was supplied with flour from this place. In 1779, during the American occupation of Kaskaskia, the inhabitants of that place, in response to the assessment of flour laid upon them by the court, delivered 54,600 pounds into the storehouse. Mention of this article occurs frequently in the old court records.²⁵

It is probably true that these mills of the Illinois showed themselves equal to a very considerable production when the burden was thrown upon them; but the magnitude of their output was certainly never so great as some of the early writers

²³ Captain Philip Pittman, *Present State of the European Settlements* (ed. 1906), pp. 85, 91, 92.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 96.

²⁵ See C. W. Alvord, in *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol. I.

supposed. Moreover, the manner in which these writers presented the case gave it a mythical suggestion.²⁶

As already indicated, the manufacture of lumber was carried on under the same roof with flour-milling. In southern Louisiana, according to Pittman, many of the planters owned water mills worked in times of flood by the current of the Mississippi River. At times of high water these establishments were operated night and day. Much of the lumber was sent to the West Indies, where it usually found a good market.²⁷

The preparation of meats, which formed an important item in the export trade of the Illinois, was a natural consequence of the abundance of corn and the cheapness and ease with which stock could be grown. "The horned cattle," in the words of Vivier, "multiplied exceedingly, most of them costing nothing either for care or food."²⁸ As early as 1719 excellent hams were exported from the Illinois. The meat and the tongues of

²⁶ For example, Imlay quotes a communication to the Earl of Hillsborough, at one time secretary of state for the North American Department, as follows: "This is no mere speculation, for it is a fact, that about the year 1746 there was a great scarcity of provisions at New Orleans, and the French settlements at the Illinois, as small as they were, sent thither in one winter upwards of eight hundred thousand weight of flour" (*A Topographical Description*, p. 105, note). And Le Page du Pratz, who also referred to this shipment, said "I have been assured that during the last war, when the flour from France was scarce, the Illinois sent down to New Orleans upwards of eight hundred thousand weight in one winter" (*Histoire de la Louisiane* [ed. 1758], I, 331). Reynolds may refer to the shipments indicated above when he says that about 1745 some four thousand deerskin sacks weighing each one hundred pounds were sent south. Even this seems very large, for when it is translated into the terms of modern production it means 2,000 barrels of 200 pounds each, or say 330 barrels from each of the mills of which we have a record in the Illinois. At this same time the settlements on the Wabash are said to have sent to New Orleans 600 barrels. There is, also, here a question about the package. Flour was usually exported in deerskin sacks. For reference to the shipments at this time, see Perkins, *Memoirs*, II, 192; John Reynolds, *Pioneer History of Illinois*, p. 60; J. Ferriss, *States and Territories of the Great West*, p. 76; Sidney Breese, *History of Illinois*, p. 195; A. Franz, *Die Kolonisation des Mississippithales*, p. 252; Monette, *Valley of the Mississippi*, p. 295; E. J. Benton, in *Johns Hopkins University Studies*, Series XXI, p. 24.

²⁷ Philip Pittman, *Present State of the European Settlements* (ed. 1906), p. 60.

²⁸ *Jesuit Relations*, LXIX, 221.

the buffalo, also, were cured and exported.²⁹ About 1720, on a voyage to the Arkansas territory, La Harpe met two pirogues descending the river with five thousand pounds of salt buffalo meat.³⁰

Another interesting industry was the preparation of bear's oil and tallow. Bears were hunted at the end of the summer months by both the French and the Indians. The fat was tried out and put in form for sale. The bend in the Mississippi River near New Madrid, Missouri, once bore an indication of this traffic in the name which it received—"L'Anse de la Graisse," or Greasy Bend—for it was the place of resort for hunters who there manufactured oil and tallow.³¹ The crude oil was often purchased from the Indians and refined by putting it in large kettles with a handful of laurel leaves, and sprinkling it, when the temperature began to rise, with a little water in which salt had been dissolved. The smoke which then arose carried off the disagreeable odor. The product was then poured into large vessels and allowed to stand, during which time the clear oil rose to the top. This was removed and served all the purposes of olive oil. The residue in the vessel was considered a "fine kind of lard fit for kitchen use, and a sovereign remedy for all kinds of pain."³² In 1762 the product of tallow and bear oil in Louisiana was valued at 25,000 pounds.³³

The preparation of meats for export involved the use of salt, and the production of this article therefore became one of

²⁹ Bossu, *Nouveaux voyages*, etc., Part I, p. 146.

³⁰ La Harpe, *Journal historique*, p. 309.

³¹ J. T. Scharf, *History of St. Louis City and County*, I, 62.

³² Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane* (ed. 1758), II, 89, 90; Dumont, *Mémoires historiques*, I, 77. Du Pratz testified that he had been cured of the rheumatism by the application of bear's grease.

³³ Villiers du Terrage, *Les dernières années de la Louisiane*, p. 147. The values of other products of Louisiana during this same time are given by Villiers du Terrage as follows:

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Indigo, 82,000 pounds at 5 livres..... | 410,000 livres |
| Tobacco, 16,000 pounds at 22 livres 10 sols..... | 3,600,000 livres |
| Wood of various kinds..... | 30,000 livres |
| Wax of shrubs for candles..... | 25,000 livres |
| Peltries | 250,000 livres |

considerable importance. Salines were found in various places. One occurred near Ste. Geneviève which had formerly been worked by the Indians and around which were scattered earthen vessels used to evaporate the brine.³⁴ Salt springs were also found in the present Gallatin County, Illinois, in Randolph, and in the present St. Clair County. Salt was enumerated by Vivier in 1750 as one of the exports of the region. Many of the posts which were dependencies of Canada were supplied from this source.³⁵ About 1804, salt was named as one of the principal exports of Ste. Geneviève.³⁶

The canoes and pirogues of the boatmen were of their own manufacture. Usually, cypress trees were selected because of their greater length and straightness. The trunk was hollowed out by igniting upon it sulphur and dry wood; as the tree was charred, the burned portion was scraped away to make room for the fresh attack of the flame.³⁷

The French of the Illinois are said to have made an excellent wine resembling claret. The quality was so good, according to J. M. Peck, that the merchants of Bordeaux "used exertions" to prevent its importation, and finally procured an edict to that effect.³⁸ At Gallipolis, Ohio, the French made a wine from a

³⁴ E. Flagg, "The Far West," in Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, XXVI, 97.

³⁵ *Jesuit Relations*, LXIX, 221.

³⁶ The Illinois salt sources were mentioned at an earlier date. In 1712, Father Gabriel Marest wrote referring to Kaskaskia, "Besides the beauty of the place, we also have salt springs in the neighborhood which are of great benefit to us." See also reference by Allouez, *Jesuit Relations*, LX, 163; and Vivier, *Jesuit Relations*, LXIX, 221. In 1802, Ste. Geneviève salt was sent as far east as the Cumberland region in Tennessee, where, although there were many salt springs, the scarcity of labor, probably combined with the comparative weakness of the brine, made the manufacture unprofitable. In 1802, while on a trip to the West, Michaux met a boat from Ste. Geneviève laden with salt, bound for Tennessee. Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, III, 216, 280.

³⁷ Dumont, *Mémoires historiques*, I, 50, 61, 62; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, II, 31-33, 188, 189.

³⁸ J. M. Peck, *A Gazetteer of Illinois* (ed. 1837), p. 19; and the same statement in the *Illinois Monthly Magazine*, I, 128. But H. M. Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, p. 120, said, "A hundred writers have spoken of the vines of the Illinois with strange exaggeration. This forms a part of the picture of the

grape supposed to have been propagated from the vines planted at Fort Duquesne.³⁹ There was a brewery on the Jesuit plantation at Kaskaskia.⁴⁰

Maple sugar and syrup were other products of the Illinois country.⁴¹ Tobacco was raised, some of which was turned into snuff for the consumption of the local population. On the Missouri side of the river, a few miles inland from Ste. Geneviève, the smelting of lead formed a considerable industry.⁴²

The household manufactures of these people were of little consequence. "The French," said Flint, "were mostly clad in skins."⁴³ Hats were little worn. Coarse stuff was used by the majority of the inhabitants in summer for pantaloons, and cloth or buckskin in winter. Moccasins made from the skins of cattle were used in the place of boots; females usually wore deerskin moccasins.⁴⁴ The methods employed for dressing the skins resembled closely the practices of the Indians. The buffalo hide, deerskin, or hide of any animal was soaked in water for several days. It was then firmly fastened to the trunk of a tree and the hair was scraped off. Then, with a piece of wood, in the end of which was fastened a bit of flint, they scraped and rubbed the skin to make it soft; and finally, further to soften and bleach it, it was soaked in warm water

romantic writers who first described Louisiana—the vintages were never considered of much importance." George Imlay, on the other hand, stated that 110 hogsheads of "well-tasted and strong wines" were made by the French settlers in the Illinois from the native grape (*Topographical Description, etc.*, p. 22); and Major Amos Stoddard, in his *Sketches of Louisiana*, p. 228, practically makes the same statement.

³⁹ C. F. Volney, *View of the Soil and Climate of the United States*, p. 329.

⁴⁰ Probably a small establishment for the production of ale, or something of that sort. The establishment was mentioned in Pittman, *Present State of the European Settlements*, etc. (ed. 1906), p. 94; and in Sidney Breese, *History of Illinois*, pp. 149, 195.

⁴¹ Dumont, *Mémoires historiques*, I, 56; and Volney, *View of the Soil and Climate of the United States*, p. 329.

⁴² Lead-smelting was one of the oldest industries of the Mississippi Valley. It was practiced not only by the settlers, but also by the Indians.

⁴³ T. Flint, *Indian Wars*, p. 166.

⁴⁴ John Reynolds, *My Own Times*, p. 63.

with the brains of the deer.⁴⁵ To give the skin a yellowish color, it was sometimes boiled in water with the leaves of the "bean-trefoil."⁴⁶ The French in Illinois had no tanned leather; harness was made from raw hide, and traces were plaited from the same material.⁴⁷

The agricultural implements of the French were of the crudest sort. The plow was made without any iron, except a small piece strapped on the point of the instrument where it cut the earth. A small cart without any iron was used in the time of harvest to carry the grain. No yokes were used, but a strong wooden bar firmly strapped to the horns of the animals with pieces of untanned leather. The churn was almost unknown. Butter was made by shaking the cream in a bottle, or by breaking it in a bowl with a spoon.⁴⁸

The houses of a greater part of the population were made from small timbers roughly hewn and placed upright in the ground only a few inches apart. The interstices were filled with sticks, mud, and stones. This dwelling was whitewashed inside and out. The roof was either thatched or shingled, but in the latter case no nails were used, the shingles being fastened on with wooden pins. The houses of the well-to-do were of a strong hewn frame, or of rough limestone, which occurred in abundance in the vicinity. This limestone, when burnt, also provided the material for plaster and whitewash.⁴⁹ The spinning wheel and the loom were seldom used in Illinois. The cotton and linen materials in which the people were clad, and their coloring materials, were brought from France.

In the earlier days mechanics were seldom met with in the French frontier posts. Even in later years, only a few carpen-

⁴⁵ Compare with the Indian method as described in *Western Reserve Historical Society Tract, No. 50*, p. 107. For the French process, see Dumont, *Mémoires historiques*, I, 146, 147; Sidney Breese, *Early History of Illinois*, p. 198.

⁴⁶ Dumont, *Mémoires historiques*, I, 50.

⁴⁷ John Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, p. 69; Breese, *History of Illinois*, pp. 195, 196.

⁴⁸ Sidney Breese, *History of Illinois*, 205, 206.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

ters, smiths, masons, and tailors were found. There were but few coopers; flour was usually exported in bags made of deer-skins. Occasionally, a millwright could be found who could make or repair the running gear of a water mill, or build a horse mill.⁵⁰

The great interest of the people was the fur trade. As Flint said, "the grand business of the young men was to navigate the almost interminable rivers, to hunt small adventures, to trade and consort with the Indians to procure furs."⁵¹ The price of labor was in consequence high. In 1766, when Captain Pittman visited the Illinois, a man was boarded and lodged the whole year on condition of his working two months of the year, namely, one in the spring and the other at harvest.⁵² The early writers were almost a unit in condemning this one-sided industrial interest of the French colonies in upper Louisiana; but from the point of view of the colonists there was a justification for it: the fur trade was highly profitable.⁵³ Pittman asserted that in some instances the net profit ran as high as 200 per cent.

This trade covered a very large part of the western river system. The French and Spaniards had carried it up the Arkansas, along the whole course of the St. Francis and White rivers, up the Mississippi to the Falls of St. Anthony, and up the Missouri nine hundred miles or more. A considerable trade was also carried on with the Indians east of the Mississippi River, and particularly with those along the Kaskaskia and Illinois rivers.⁵⁴ But the trade of the Missouri River was far more valuable than perhaps all the other together, because of the large number of Indians along the course of the river, and the finer quality of the furs.⁵⁵ At St. Louis, which soon after its founding in 1764 became the emporium of the western fur trade, the average annual value of furs collected during

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 205, 206.

⁵¹ T. Flint, *Indian Wars*, p. 166.

⁵² *Present State of the European Settlements*, p. 102.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵⁴ Amos Stoddard, *Sketches of Louisiana*, p. 298.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

the fifteen years prior to the Louisiana purchase was estimated at \$203,750, while the annual value of the goods each year sent up the Missouri River to satisfy the Indian trade amounted to \$61,250.⁵⁶ But before St Louis was founded, other collecting points in the upper Mississippi Valley reported large quantities of furs. In 1702, M. de Juchereau, lieutenant-general of the jurisdiction of Montreal, who, with some thirty persons from the same territory, established a post on the Wabash, collected in a short time about fifteen thousand buffalo skins.⁵⁷ At Detroit, during the years 1701-4, thirty thousand beavers were killed; about the year 1705, fifteen thousand hides and skins are said to have been sent from the Wabash region to one place, namely to Mobile.⁵⁸ In 1778, the estimated output of Ouiatanon was eight thousand pounds, and of Vincennes, five thousand pounds.⁵⁹

Notwithstanding the success of the fur trade, it was not a wholesome success; it did not put the colonists in the way of permanent benefit; on the contrary, the fur trade tended to exhaust the very resource upon which it depended, and, as the fur-bearing animals retreated before the westward march of the emigrant, the traders were destined to be left without an industry. Meanwhile, agriculture was neglected, and the long pursuit of the Indian trade had unfitted the colonists for any-

⁵⁶ The above value—\$203,750—consisted of the following:

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|----------|
| Castors | 36,000 pounds, valued at | \$66,820 |
| Otters | 8,000 pounds, valued at | 37,100 |
| Bear skins | 5,100 pounds, valued at | 14,200 |
| Buffalo skins | 850 pounds, valued at | 4,750 |
| Raccoon, wild cat, fox skins, etc. | valued at | 12,280 |
| Martens | 1,300 valued at | 3,900 |
| Lynx | 300 valued at | 1,500 |
| Deerskins | 158,000 valued at | 63,200 |

The goods valued at \$61,250 sent up the Missouri yielded an annual profit of \$16,720. As many of the traders were too poor to bear the expense of the freight, or to wait for the returns from the European market, they exchanged these with merchants for Indian goods, who made a profit of from 100 to 130 per cent. (Stoddard, *Sketches*, p. 298.)

⁵⁷ La Harpe, *Journal historique*, p. 367.

⁵⁸ E. J. Benton, in *Johns Hopkins University Studies*, XXI, 25.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

thing else. Thus, the one-sidedness of their industry proved a great element of weakness. In the second place, the cession of Illinois to the English had been a severe blow to the loyal French. Finally, the nature of the colonial government itself was unfortunate. It was military in character; it fostered trade monopoly. In the earlier period of the history of this region the southern trade of the Illinois seems to have been almost entirely in the hands of one Jean Milhet.⁶⁰ About 1754, the restriction of the traffic of the Illinois with the country about the Ohio and the Great Lakes, resulting from exclusive treaties given by Duquesne to certain inhabitants of Canada, destroyed the importance of the commerce to such an extent that certain of the established families left the territory.⁶¹ Referring to the military character of the government, Volney related that "All commerce and property hang on his (the commandant's) will and caprice, and to enrich a few favorites or relatives, the rest were condemned to poverty and misery."⁶² Pittman wrote in the same strain:

The whole Indian trade was so much in the power of the commandant that nobody was permitted to be concerned with it but on condition of giving him part of the profit. If any person brought goods within the limit of his jurisdiction without his particular license, he would oblige them to sell their merchandise at a very moderate profit to the commissary on the king's account, calling it an emergency of government, and employ the same goods in his own private commission. It may easily be supposed from what has been said that a complaint to the government at New Orleans met with very little redress.⁶³

Not only did the military nature of the government and the trade restrictions exercise a repressive influence on all enterprise, but even the character of the people seemed opposed to any industrial accomplishment. After a residence in this fer-

⁶⁰ Baudry des Lozières, *Second voyage à la Louisiane* (ed. 1803), pp. 148, 149.

⁶¹ Villiers du Terrage, *Les dernières années de la Louisiane*, p. 57.

⁶² C. F. Volney, *A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States*, p. 337; see also the testimony of E. Flagg, "The Far West," in Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, XXVIII, 545.

⁶³ *European Settlements on the Mississippi*, etc. (ed. 1906), p. 100.

tile land for nearly three-quarters of a century they passed on to the American pioneer scarcely any tangible benefits. C. F. Volney, who wrote of them about the year 1804, expressed little sympathy with their misfortunes:

The Frenchman's ideas [he said] evaporate into ceaseless chat. . . . He exposes himself to bickering and contradiction . . . this habit must inevitably tend to make men superficial and thoughtless. I have often questioned Canadians of the frontier, as to distance, time, place, measure, capacity, and magnitude, and have found their notions crude and obscure. . . . They are unequal to calculations in any degree complex. An American settler will state exactly the distance in miles or hours, and the weight or magnitude in pounds, gallons, or yards, and is capable of entering into calculations or of forming estimates. This practical skill is productive of important effects in human life.⁶⁴

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⁶⁴ *View of the Soil and Climate of the United States of America* (ed. 1804), pp. 347, 348.